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# Former Beck's Imperial Hotel - Castlemaine Historic Area



B1975 Beck's Imperial Hotel

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## Location

56 Lyttleton Street,, CASTLEMAINE VIC 3450 - Property No B1975

## Municipality

MOUNT ALEXANDER SHIRE

## Level of significance

State

## Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H0132

## Heritage Listing

National Trust

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - May 7, 2008

Former Beck's Imperial Hotel Castlemaine, is a two storey hotel with attic erected in 1861 for Faulder Watson, almost certainly to the designs of architects Purchas and Swyer. The five bay elaborate corner piers and three pedimented dormer windows are set into an iron ridge created mansard roof. The cast iron verandah is later. The former Beck's Imperial Hotel is one of the most distinctive and unusual Classical Revival buildings in Victoria. The former hotel is one of the most important and probably the most distinctive hotel in the State. The structure

has historical associations and forms part of the important historic townscape of Castlemaine. Architecturally, both the composition and detailing of the buildings are highly innovative and uncommon elements. The former Beck's Imperial Hotel is in good condition and is substantially intact. The recent verandah is believed to have replaced a cantilevered one, parapet urns are missing, the roof is iron and other alterations have been made.

Classified; 28/07/1966

Part of Castlemaine Historic Area B4894

Castlemaine grew as a result of the discovery of gold along Forest Creek in July, 1851. By December of that year the population on the field was greater than that of Melbourne. In 1852 Mr Templeton surveyed the township of Castlemaine and in 1853 the first auction of the town site was held.

The Castlemaine goldfield was allegedly the richest alluvial goldfield in the world. Such was the prosperity of the diggers that the townsfolk were optimistically expectant of Castlemaine becoming Victoria's second city. The prosperity and the optimism is reflected in the high number of imposing buildings erected in the first few years of the town's life. However, the rich alluvial diggings were worked out within 15-20 years. From the 1870's the town's population began to drift away, but they left behind a rich legacy of the town's former prosperity in the form of its buildings.

Within the Castlemaine Historic Area may be found many items of significance. These range from intact nineteenth century streetscapes composed of imposing public buildings to simple miners' cottages. Within the historic area there are a number of identifiable component areas, each telling an important part of the history of Castlemaine. In addition, there are many other sites of significance outside of these areas, but still within the Historic Area. These include the former steam flourmill, the Church of England, the Congregational Church and Forest and Barkers Creeks.

Despite the town's topographical confinements to the valley of the two creeks, the wide streets and large buildings convey an atmosphere of grand spaciousness in this central Victorian goldfields town.

Historic Area Classified: 01/12/1982

Hermes Number 69227

Property Number

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*This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.*

*For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>*